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Statement submitted by Priests for Life, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

It has been said regarding the Millennium Development Goals that "We treasured what we measured" and that for the post 2015 we should "Measure what we treasure". People are at the centre of development and their lives and health need to be treasured; reduction of mortality rates, especially newborn, child, and maternal need to be measured.

Priests for Life believes that the well-being, dignity and worth of all — every human life without exception — is a core treasure and needs to be the foundation of policies and programs for sustainable development.

It is proven that access to maternal health care, including pre-natal care and skilled childbirth assistance, reduces maternal and new born deaths and adequate nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life — from conception to the second birthday — not only saves the lives of women and children but reduces the devastating impact of stunted growth and malnutrition.

Access to abortion, whether in the context of "sexual and reproductive health" or "reproductive rights" is opposed and restricted by many countries. Access to abortion does not have universal support, is not a universally recognized human right, and does not belong in the post 2015 development agenda.

Abortion is child mortality and can result in physical, psychological, emotional or spiritual harm to the mother. Any indicator that measures access to abortion will conflict with the value and treasure that many countries place on the lives of children from the moment of conception and ought not to be included in the sustainable development goals.

Women, and countries, deserve programs and policies that ensure healthy reproduction. The elimination of malnutrition during the first 1,000 days of life and provision of nutrition for all women and adolescent girls of child-bearing age will not only save the lives of women and children and contribute to their well-being, but will improve the economies of countries.

When women of child-bearing age are well-nourished they are healthier and better able to provide nourishment for their child in the womb, able to successfully and exclusively breastfeed, and to make nutritious food choices for their child under age two. When children thrive, they are empowered to become healthy adults who are better equipped to make meaningful contributions to their families, society, and country.

The future we want is one in which every human life is treasured for his or her innate worth and no member of the human family is denied the most basic right — the right to life — through policies that allow individuals to be marginalized and treated as a problem, rather than as potential contributors to development.